

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2019

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

Councillors V Richichi, R Ashman, R D Bayliss, C C Benfield, A S Black, R Blunt, R Boam, A J Bridgen, R Canny, J Clarke, D Everitt, T Eynon, M French, J Geary, L A Gillard, S Gillard, T Gillard, D Harrison, B Harrison-Rushton, M D Hay, G Hault, J Hault, R Johnson, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE, N J Rushton, A C Saffell, C A Sewell, S Sheahan, N Smith, D E J Tebbutt, J Windram, A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, Mr G Jones, Mrs M Long, Mrs M Meredith, Mrs B Smith and Miss E Warhurst

## **20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Allman, D Bigby and D J Stevenson.

## **21. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

## **22. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

The Chairman referred to the success of Picnic in the Park and Music in the Park, which had been particularly well attended this year. He expressed thanks to all the staff involved for their hard work to prepare the park after the bad weather. He also thanked the members who had attended the event.

The Chairman announced that the flag had been raised for Armed Forces Day and he was grateful to have taken part with members of the Armed Forces whose dignity and discipline should be remembered.

The Chairman said farewell to Glyn Jones, Strategic Director of Housing, Property and Customer Services, who would be leaving the Council in August after nearly 5 years' service. He wished him every success in the future.

## **23. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor N J Rushton shared some of the key messages from the 2018/19 provisional outturn report which had recently been considered by Cabinet. He announced that financial performance had continued to improve across the Council and reserves remained healthy due to growth in income from business rates and the new homes bonus. He reported that £1.4 million had been transferred into the self-sufficiency reserve taking the total to £4.2 million, meaning there was now a healthy reserve which would enable the Council to respond to future financial risks in a rational and reasoned way. He felt it was prudent to have this reserve given the uncertainty going forwards.

Councillor N J Rushton highlighted the remaining surpluses and reserves which had been allocated, including £200,000 for a new Local Centres Frontage Improvement Scheme in Castle Donington, Kegworth, Ibstock and Measham, £20,000 to fund an options appraisal for Moira Furnace, £20,000 to support the administration of EMEG Access to Work

Chairman's initials

scheme, £30,000 to commission a Carbon Footprint report, £30,000 to undertake a food waste recycling pilot and £30,000 to fund health and safety improvements.

Councillor N J Rushton reported that £4.6 million of the Housing Revenue Account surplus had been transferred to the Loan Redemption Reserve which now had the full £13 million of funds in place to repay the maturity loans due for redemption in 2022, ahead of the target date in 2020.

Councillor S Sheahan made reference to the supplements from business rates. With respect to Moira he suggested that consideration be given to expanding the number of workshops on site.

Councillor N Smith supported the comments on the need to expand Moira Furnace.

Councillor N J Rushton announced that officers had been successful in securing £7,500 of funding from Barnardo's, which would be used to deliver a physical activity based school holiday programme in Coalville for children who were most in need. The programme was being delivered in partnership with Everyone Active.

Councillor B Harrison-Rushton welcomed the additional funding in Kegworth, which was needed in such a fast growing area. He also welcomed the announcement regarding the funding from Barnardo's, especially considering a recent report from the Education Policy Institute which showed that the fitness of students in low income families fell 18 times faster during the summer holidays.

Councillor R D Bayliss said farewell to Glyn Jones and thanked him on behalf of the tenants. He stated that he had a transformative agenda and had been a great servant to this Council. He commented on their positive working relationship and the progress that had been made during his tenure.

Councillor R D Bayliss announced the completion of the second phase of the building programme of new council houses, with 24 new council homes built and let on the site of the old Police Station on Ashby Road, Coalville. Phase three of the programme will see the development of the former Coked Hat public house in Greenhill, a site which has been derelict for 15 years and which the Council purchased last year. He reported that planning permission had been granted for 8 new council homes, and construction would commence in August. The viability of sites in Measham and Whitwick were also being assessed.

Councillor R D Bayliss stated that the Council had added to the supply of affordable rented housing by acquiring 45 new homes from developers as part of planning agreements over the previous 2 years. A further 2 homes had been acquired in Ashby de la Zouch and were due to be handed over in the next month. This meant that the Council had added 95 new homes to its council housing stock over the last 2 years.

Councillor R D Bayliss announced that the Council had signed a Section 106 agreement with East Midlands Homes at the Holywell Spring Farm site enabling a land transfer which would see the first publicly funded extra care scheme in North West Leicestershire. The Council would be contributing over £1 million to enable this scheme to go ahead which would see 65 apartments built in a state-of-the-art scheme for older people.

Councillor M B Wyatt welcomed the announcement in respect of the development of Cropston Drive. He asked whether the new council homes were going to be carbon neutral.

Councillor D Everitt welcomed the progress made regarding new council houses. He hoped that the Council would be in a position to provide more than it sold.

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In response to Councillor M B Wyatt, Councillor R D Bayliss advised that the new council homes would be built in accordance with the latest regulations; however the exact specification had not been drawn up yet.

In response to Councillor D Everitt, Councillor R D Bayliss advised that over the past 2 years, the Council had acquired 95 homes and sold 85.

In response to a question from Councillor A Bridgen, Councillor R D Bayliss advised that there were currently around 650 people on the housing waiting list and there were around 330 new council tenancies issued each year.

## **24. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

## **25. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

There were no questions received.

## **26. MOTIONS**

Councillor A Woodman moved the motion as set out on the agenda and spoke to the motion. He stated that the recognition of there being a climate emergency was not new. He highlighted the progress made in the battle against emissions in the last 30 years, and in particular that since 1990, the UK had performed better in reducing emissions on a per person basis than any other G7 nation and would be one of the first developed countries to completely remove coal as an energy source. He acknowledged that more needed to be done and he welcomed the Government introducing a legally binding net zero target. He added that he wanted the Council to go further than this and he updated members on what the district council had been doing to progress the green agenda as a key leader on this issue.

Councillor J Legrys seconded the motion and reserved his comments.

Councillor S Sheahan felt that there may be clear solutions but a longer term view was needed. He added that declaring a climate emergency brought the issue into focus. He felt it was important to involve the public in discussions about the solutions. He felt that it needed to be recognised that a tipping point had been reached.

Councillor J Clarke requested that residents be provided with information on what materials could be recycled and he asked what plans were in place to increase public awareness.

Councillor M B Wyatt stated that he fully supported the motion. He highlighted that the biggest contributor to the carbon footprint was building and the Council had no policy to delivery carbon neutral homes.

Councillor C C Benfield welcomed the motion and commented that he believed the appetite for this change was shared by most members. He acknowledged that the world was rapidly reaching a tipping point from which there would be no return. He stated that the motion rightly suggested that the Council could only operate in its own scope of control or influence, however he argued that there was far more within the Council's power and resources than was intimated by the motion. He also argued that the actions of the Council had repercussions far wider than the motion suggested; the Council's influence could radically reduce the carbon footprint of the entire district via planning regulations, contracts, sub-contracts and training courses. Councillor C C Benfield asked members to consider to what immediate actions they were committing themselves in

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declaring a carbon emergency, and what the Council's targets would be in planning for carbon neutrality by 2030. He referred to the graphs circulated at the meeting showing two approaches to achieving carbon neutrality and the challenges presented by each approach. He concluded that the Council needed to commit to a path now.

Councillor D Everitt agreed that the information to residents on recycling needed to be clarified. He highlighted the benches in Thringstone that were made from recycled materials.

Councillor D Tebbutt welcomed the motion and was glad that the Council had come together to put this motion forward in the best interests of the district. He commented that climate change was an issue that affected everyone, and being the youngest member of the Council he was concerned about the future of the planet. He highlighted a report from the Breakthrough National Centre for Climate Restoration which suggested that civilisation may be close to its end by 2050. He stated that everyone had a responsibility to ensure the planet had a future. He welcomed the introduction of the target of achieving carbon neutrality and the commitment to work closer with other bodies to deliver the best results. He believed that with the correct resources, powers and guidance from central Government, more could be done to make the district as green as possible and set an example to other local authorities. He referred to the evident increase in calls for councils to declare a climate emergency and noted that Leicestershire County Council had already done so. He urged members to support the motion and declare a climate emergency.

Councillor R Canny stated that this issue was a crisis of our generation and the next generation to come. She felt that the time to act was now. She agreed that education was the place to start and commented that each person had to be responsible for making a difference in whatever way they could.

Councillor R Blunt stated that the green agenda was a Council priority, however more had to be done. He highlighted the lack of a charging point at the Council for electric cars and felt this was setting a poor example. He commented that the green agenda needed to be in the forefront of everyone's mind.

Councillor J Legrys commented on the need to support developers in this process and stated that he would be working on this via the review of the Local Plan. He highlighted the high level of car ownership in the district due to the location of housing and employment. He expressed support for the young people who were bringing these issues to the forefront. He highlighted the Council's level of influence as a local planning authority. He urged members to support the motion.

Councillor A Woodman exercised his right to reply and responded to the comments made by members.

The Chairman then put the motion to the vote. It was

RESOLVED THAT:

- a. "That this Council notes:
  - i. the UK has, at international level, signed into the Paris Accord 2015 and to the commitments agreed in 2018 at the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) which amongst other things recognise the need to limit by 2030 temperature rises to between 1.5° C and 2° C above the internationally recognised preindustrial baseline;
  - ii. the UK has at a national level, set targets into law under the Climate Change Act 2008, but despite outperforming every G7 nation by cutting emissions by more than 40 per cent since 1990, and recently breaking the record for the

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longest continuous period without using coal in the energy mix since the Industrial Revolution, the UK is not currently on track to meet its statutory carbon targets set in the 4th and 5th carbon budgets for the period 2023-2027 and 2028-2032 respectively;

- iii. This Council already demonstrates its public commitment to the environment through the Green Footprints agenda which includes a Free Tree scheme, efforts to increase recycling and making Council homes more efficient by installing air source heat pumps.
- b. That this Council further notes that in October 2018 the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published scientific evidence and determined that any rise above 1.5° C would cause much more serious outcomes than Paris Accord envisaged, thereby having a more rapid adverse impact in the north and south polar regions and the Himalayan 'third pole' and in doing so recognises that the current efforts and targets towards reducing emissions and limiting temperature rises is clearly not enough.
- c. That this Council also notes that there are increasing calls for councils to declare a climate emergency and to commit to carbon neutrality by 2030 for their administrative areas.
- d. That this Council notes that:-
  - i. it can only operate within its own scope of control and influence;
  - ii. there is a need to balance the competing demands on its decreasing resources and finances;
  - iii. not all the technological solutions nor the required powers and resources are currently in place.
- e. That this Council declares a climate emergency and will aim to achieve carbon neutrality from its own operations by 2030 and accordingly requests officers to develop an environment strategy necessary to achieve this aspiration together with an assessment of the cost and technology implications of so doing to enable the Cabinet and Council to take an informed decision whilst recognising that this will potentially require the reallocation of resources by the Council.
- f. That this Council commits to work with business and other public bodies across the district county and region to deliver this ambitious goal through all relevant technologies, strategies and the revision of the Local Plan where this aligns with national policy and guidance
- g. That this Council recognises that there is an increasing urgency for action to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and in doing so calls for the support of all parties to urge the Government to:-

provide the powers and resources to local authorities and others to make the wider 2030 target more possible; work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

## **27. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

## **28. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019.

Chairman's signature

It was moved by Councillor J Bridges, seconded by Councillor V Richichi and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**29. PLANNING PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE**

Councillor R Ashman presented the report to members, reminding them of the peer challenge of the Planning service which had been undertaken in February 2018 as part of the Council's commitment to continued development. He highlighted the work which had been undertaken by the cross party working group which had been established as a result of the peer challenge, and the subsequent changes which had been made to the operation of the Planning Committee.

Councillor N Smith referred to the changes which had been made as a result of the review and personally felt that there had been a significant improvement. He highlighted the lack of overturned applications since the changes had been implemented. He thanked the officers for their work and added that the relationships were far better than they were previously.

Councillor J Legrys spoke in support of the motion. He welcomed the review and felt that the process was now far more transparent.

Councillor D Everitt felt that the outcome of the review had not been positive for members of the public as the number of applications considered by the Planning Committee had been greatly reduced and the public were not able to take part in the same way. He felt that the changes were negative and that having less members on the Planning Committee was anti-democratic.

Councillor A C Saffell commented that the planning process was working better and ward member engagement was far more important than it was before. He welcomed the changes.

Councillor R Ashman acknowledged that there were challenges ahead with some major applications due to come before the Planning Committee. He felt the review had made the Council more focussed on planning issues and encouraging the resolution of any problems prior to the Planning Committee stage. He added that in a short period of time, a much improved Planning Committee had been arrived at which was evidenced by the fact that appeals were rarely lost. He highlighted the cost of losing appeals.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The continued progress made against the action plan be noted.
- b) The intention of the cross party working group to continue to meet to complete the outstanding actions in the action plan, and to monitor and review procedures as necessary be noted, with Planning Advisory Service involvement as and when required.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.47 pm

Chairman's signature

